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THE 1957 PEKING CONFERENCE

In the January 20 Bulletin we reported in detail on some accusations made at a session of the Executive Committee of the Three Self Movement in Peking November 28 to Dec. 4, 1957. We now have more information about that conference and its aftermath in an article by Samuel E. Boyle (See previous Bulletin) in the Japan Times for May 24. His report is based on Tien Feng Magazine, which he continues to receive.

After telling of the general "imperialist" charges which the conference directed at the missionaries, he goes on to speak of the purge of the rightist elements hidden within the church. Our January 20 article tells of the charges against five men, but strangely enough that report, based on a Hsin Hua news dispatch, says nothing about the denunciation of Rev. Marcus Chen. Mr. Boyle says, "According to Heavenly Wind, Chairman Y. T. Wu and eight other prominent leaders accused Marcus Chen at the Peiping conference for his speech in March 1957, at the People's Political Conference (See Bulletins for August and September last year, where this speech is given in full), in which the aged fundamentalist pastor was alleged to have slandered the Communist Party, the People's Government of China, and the Three Self Patriotic Movement. The amusing thing was that the speech for which Marcus Chen was publicly denounced and purged was published in Heavenly Wind itself, as the leading article of the May 13, 1957 issue." (He could have added, and before that in the March 25th number of the People's Daily, Peking.)

Mr. Boyle's conclusion from reading the reports of this conference is that "the Government is squeezing the co-operating churches even more tightly to extract from them even more absolute conformity to the Communist Party line and social program for China. It is merely a part of the disciplinary process by which the Peiping regime seeks to stiffen its control of all the doings and thinking of its masses, to prevent any "revisionists" or deviationists coming up to hinder the national policy."

The pattern of that conference has since been reproduced everywhere throughout China on the provincial, district and local levels. "News in Heavenly Wind" is coming in from all parts of China telling of long indoctrination conferences on education in socialism, and accusations of rightists, with street parades and public oath-swearing ceremonies promising the loyalty of the churches to Mao Tse-tung and the Communist Party.

Among all these conferences Mr. Boyle singles out the one held in Changsha for attention. It lasted from January 13 to February 12, 1958, with 96 delegates in attendance, and was held, as the report states, "under the strong management and leadership of the Communist Party and the People's Government of China."

Issued bi-weekly to keep mission boards and missionaries informed on Christian work in China. Information from Chinese church magazines and other Chinese sources is passed on as objectively as possible, with a minimum of interpretation. When interpretation is necessary, it is enclosed in parentheses as the comment of the editor. ANNUAL RATES: Domestic, \$2.00; Overseas, Firstclass \$4.00, Secondclass \$3.00. Airmail \$5.00 in 15¢ zone, \$7.00 in 25¢ zone.

The two written works for special study in this conference were Mao's speech "Concerning the Problem of Rectification and Control of the Inner Contradictions Among the People" and Chou En-lai's "Government's Work Report."

Three Christian leaders of that area were denounced as rightists, but since Mr. Boyle does not use the Wade system of transliteration, we cannot identify them. According to his report, "One was a Rev. Li Hung-ng of the Church of Christ in China; a second, Le Sheung-shu, of the Chinese Wesleyan Methodist Church (Hsun Tao Hui); a third, Rev. Ue Kwan, of the Chinese Lutheran Church." The denunciation speeches charge them with being "rightists wearing the cloak of religion to work against the Chinese Communist Government."

In addition, there was considerable denunciation of a faith-healing movement within the churches. There are evidently in Hunan traveling evangelists (Tien Feng calls them vagabonds) who emphasize faith-healing, demon-exorcism, and the second coming. These fanatic elements despise government, and accordingly refuse to co-operate with the Three Self Movement.

Similar conferences have been held in "Taiyuan, Shansi; Kweilin, Kuangsi; Inner Mongolia; Amoy, Swatow, Wanchow, Nancheong (Could these be Wenchow and Nanchang?), some Manchurian towns and many, many more places."

Mr. Boyle quotes a charge hurled at these rightists within the Christian fold. They are said to believe that "believers in religion have two governments, that is, heaven's government and the government on earth. If the governments on earth and the government of heaven come into conflict, then we Christians, even to the last drop of blood, even at the price of persecution and suffering, must never bow to the earthly government." (It is hard to see how the Three Self Christian leaders could object to that statement. As we have seen, Kiang Wen-han's article on Church and State - see February 3 Bulletin - implies the same thing, and no true Christian could deny it.)

(Mr. Boyle's report states in several places that the conference lasted from October 28 to December 4. The dates we have received from Hsin Hua were from November 28 to December 4. I don't know whether Mr. Boyle misread an 11th month date for 10th month, or whether Hsin Hua, as reported by our Hong Kong Consulate, made the opposite mistake. Some of Mr. Boyle's statements do suggest a very extended conference.)

In a separate mimeographed statement Mr. Boyle gives a translation of the charges of Y. T. Wu and the eight other leaders against Marcus Chen. His speech, they said, was "an attack on the Communist Party and on Socialism. Because he used the name of the Church to make his attack he thus agitated the Christians to oppose the Communist Party and stirred up the people of the whole nation to oppose the People's Government. His speech slandered Soviet Russia and exalted America. It also defamed the Three Self Patriotic Movement and stirred up strife among the denominations within our great patriotic unity."

Chen's charge that some of the Communist actions had been "worse than digging up our ancestors' graves" was particularly obnoxious. They say, "This is the greatest defamation ever made against the Communist Party, the People's Government, the vast People of our nation, against our constitution and against the religious policy."

Again, Mr. Chen had excused the mistakes made by the Government in carrying out the religious policy by saying that in establishing new policies it is difficult to avoid mistakes, and by comparison with the mistakes made in the fields of education, industry, economics, public health, etc., the mistakes in the field of religious policy had been rather minor. His critics put these two statements together, and say that if the mistakes in religious policy had been minor, and yet were bad enough to be compared with digging up our ancestors' graves, then it is evident that the major errors with which Mr. Chen is charging the Communist regime in the field of education, etc., must be very bad. They conclude, "He is quite clever at appearing carefree and broadminded and at the same time defaming poisonously."

This attitude of Mr. Chen's is gross ingratitude. "The Party and the People elected Rev. Chen as a member of the Political Affairs Committee. Our fellow workers provided a foreign residence for him and a garden so he could live there. They gave him adequate supplies. The

winter, when most families had only one half a ton of coal due to the shortage of it, Rev. Chen said his family would have to have 20 tons of hard coal. All workers of our various churches respect Rev. Chen, and yet he repays us with hatred for favors like these."

The article also condemns two other Christian leaders who are said to have been influenced by Chen's attitude. One is the Paoting Congregational preacher Ma Hsing-ke (Mr. Boyle spells it Ma Sing-kaak, but I think we have the identification correct), and the other he calls Cheung Pak-kwan, but we have not been able to identify him.

A SHANGHAI VISITOR

H. S. Williams, a reporter from Japan, spent several days in Shanghai recently, and reports his experiences in the Mainichi for March 13. Much of his general impressions reproduces what we have already reported from other visitors, but he has some new things to say about churches in Shanghai. St. Andrew's Church, formerly in connection with the Mission for Seamen, has now been converted into a factory. He also walked past the Moore Memorial Church, and has this to say:

"Many serious young people were standing about the entrance, but we pushed our way inside. It was crowded--more crowded than most churches we have attended. The original pews were still there, and every seat was occupied. We stood at the back from which position we had a good view despite the smoke haze.

"The pulpit may still have been there, but it was not visible. Maybe it was behind the large coloured photograph of Mr. Mao Tse-tung, or perhaps it was hidden by the posters, which we judged to be party slogans, or perhaps it was covered up by the many red-coloured notices.

"The speaker was droning from a rostrum in a manner that seemed to us more dull than many sermons we have listened to. We noticed that everyone was listening most attentively, or so it seemed. Many in the congregation--if that is the correct word to apply to a political meeting in a church--were busily taking notes.

"Being curious as to the nature of the sermon, we inquired of the doorkeeper, who appeared pleased at our attendance. He informed us that it was a meeting of the People's Organization.

"We thought then that maybe we were beginning to understand what our guide meant, when he said that people were free to worship at over one hundred churches which are still open in Shanghai."

UNDERSTANDING CHINA

This is a book by former Baptist missionary Dr. Earl H. Cressy (Thos. Nelson and Sons, \$5.00). The subtitle defines it as a Handbook of Background Information on Changing China, and the Table of Contents bears out that description. The book is divided into five parts, as follows: The Structure of Chinese Society; the Movement of Chinese History; the Development of Chinese Thought; Break-up and Attempts at Modern Synthesis; The People's Republic of China. Each of these parts is again divided into a half dozen chapters or so. In actual reading the book is not quite so systematic as the Table of Contents seems to indicate, but is rather a discursive exposition of Chinese history and culture, with a good deal of attention to the outstanding philosophical thinkers in China's history. This is an important aspect of Chinese culture which other writers have been inclined to neglect, and so it is good to have this book as the result of Dr. Cressy's lifelong interest in the more philosophical side of China's culture.

But to call it a handbook is something of a misnomer, for the book does not systematically give us the information we would expect from a handbook. For example, under Part III, in discussing Hsun Tzu he says, "Confucianism lacked eminent scholars at this time," and if the reader asks, "At what time", he will not find an easy answer. It is true that the sentence goes on to place Hsun Tzu in the Former Han dynasty, but then if the inquiring reader harks back to Part II on Chinese History, he will find no reference at all to the Former Han, but only to the 400 years of the Han dynasty, and then he might very well ask, "Did the Former Han Dynasty come before the Han Dynasty, or is it a part of it?"

There are many such places, where the book takes for granted that the reader knows precisely those things you usually turn to a handbook for. The book will therefore be rather frustrating to a reader who cannot fill in these lacunae for himself, but since most Bulletin readers should be able to do that, I can recommend it to you as a background book of cultural and philosophic information about China.

MISSIONARY NEWS

Recent deaths: Miss Miriam Shaw, R.N., formerly superintendent of Nurses at Grace Hospital (Seventh Day Baptist), Liuho, Kiangsu, in California on May 10.

Yale In China has announced that retiring Yale Chaplain Sid Lovett will take Charlie Long's place as their representative at New Asia College in Hong Kong for the coming year. Charlie Long, former Episcopal missionary in Nanking, is going to Geneva for service with the World Student Christian Federation for two years.

CHURCH NEWS

A 28-day Study Institute was held in Paoting recently, attended by 123 pastors and workers from 24 Protestant groups in various parts of Hopei Province. During the Institute five persons were denounced for their rightist tendencies. They all admitted their guilt, but the newspaper account states that their confessions were "superficial and shallow and therefore the struggle against them will continue." The men denounced were: Rev. Ma Hsing-ke, pastor of Congregational Church in Paoting (See the first article above. Though a People's Deputy, he was charged with having urged the clergy "not to listen to what the Communist Party says"); Rev. Shang Chiu-cheng and Rev. Li Yen-lin, both Methodist pastors (The former for claiming that the Hungarian revolt was an internal contradiction of the people and not an imperialist subversive activity, and the latter for opposing the regime's agricultural policies); Tung Chao-jui, Assemblies of God pastor in Shihchiachuang; and Li Tze-chin of Tangshan.

CATHOLIC NEWS

In the last Bulletin we reported the sentencing of three priests and a layman in the Hankow area. One, Peter Alcantara, we tentatively identified as a missionary. But we now have his full name, Peter Alcantara Cheng, so he is evidently a Chinese priest.

Archbishop Chou Chi-shih of Nanchang, Kiangsi, has been under attack as a rightist. He has already had one prison term, but was released last year. He has recently had a three-months brain-washing course, and is said to have confessed his guilt before a meeting in Nanchang attended by Communist officials and leaders of Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association. The Kiangsi Daily News, in describing the scene, said that the 66-year old prelate's face was "all red" and he was "perspiring all over" as he faced his accusers. It did not say what happened to him afterwards.

GENERAL NEWS

Wu Yi-fang, former President of Ginling College for girls in Nanking, and now vice-governor of Kiangsu Province, was one of a delegation of ten Chinese women to attend the 4th Congress of Women's International Democratic Federation in Vienna June 1-5.

The Lingyin Buddhist temple in Hangchow has been completely repaired at a cost to the Government of half a million yuan. A new Sitting Buddha has been installed in place of the one destroyed some years ago. The new one is 21 meters high. In the tenth century this temple had 73 halls and 3,000 monks.

The new alphabet in China has a magazine for its promotion, Wenzi Gaige (Language Reform). The May number states that experiments in Kiangsu Province show that with the new alphabet, illiterates could learn 500 Chinese characters in ten days, and it took only one month to become literate. Both Shantung and Szechuan have elaborate plans for using the new alphabet in eliminating illiteracy. It is being urged that all public signs, commodity wrappers, etc. add alphabetical annotation.

It was reported on May 20 that the number of people now studying in spare-time literacy classes has risen to 61 million. Honan, Hunan and Kiangsi are especially mentioned as putting on successful campaigns. The news agency says, "By the end of April this year, 137 counties in various parts of the country had virtually wiped out illiteracy." Shanghai illiterates are now said to constitute only 13% of the population.

1958 is election year in China, and well-nigh 100% of the electorate is casting votes on the lowest level, for local Congresses. This lowest level election took place on May 18, and the last stage, the election of the second National People's Congress, will take place in mid-July.